

**Cohesion in Arabic Grammatical Tradition: The Concept of *ʔiltibās*
in Sībawayhi's *Kitāb***

Zeinab A. Taha
American University in Cairo

Abstract

There has never been a lack of interest among Arab grammarians to express the role of meaning in maintaining cohesion in the Arabic sentence. It is true that the early grammar books were compiled to primarily preserve the Arabic language's purity and correctness, and to avoid *lahn* and wrong *'iʔrāb*, but, as early as Sībawayhi, we could see the beginning of semantic explanation, even though it was primarily to justify case inflections. Early grammarians expressed their interest in semantics at the level of the sentence as early as Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*. We find that Sībawayhi, throughout his book gives judgments and evaluations about what is and is not considered *kalām*, what fulfills a meaning, and what does not. In many of those instances, the answer to his questions were semantically based. In order to illustrate how semantic relations, within the sentence, is maintained, it is essential to study few terms which Sībawayhi used, some of which found its way in the writings of subsequent grammarians, while others disappeared altogether, or got replaced by other terms related to the same concepts (Taha 2010). One of the most important terms, introduced by Sībawayhi, is the term *ʔiltibās*. In this paper, I will argue that Sībawayhi used the term *ʔiltibās* technically to refer to sentence cohesion and to justify syntactic operations and case inflections. The article surveys various contexts in which the term was used in Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*, followed by an analysis of these passages and a discussion.

Key words: case, cohesion, sentence cohesion, inflection, *ʔiltibās*, *sabab*, Sībawayhi

1. Introduction

To my knowledge, the concept of *ʔiltibās* has only been dealt with by Troupeau (1978), Mosel (1980), and Carter (1985). I will not include Baalabaki's work (2008) here since he mainly treated the phonological aspect of *ʔiltibās*. While Carter presented a detailed analysis

of *ʔiltibās* as a semantic term, neither Troupeau nor Mosel treated the term as technical. Instead, they recognized it only to mean “confusing with, ambiguity, and merging with another item.” As will be shown in this article, the non-technical meaning of *ʔiltibās* can very easily be translated as “confusion.” More important, however, for our purpose, is the technical use of the term. In this context, we understand *ʔiltibās* as “fusing or binding the sentence elements together.”

In his detailed article on the term *sabab* in Sībawayhi’s *Kitāb*, Carter explained that the term *ʔiltibās*, like *sabab*, also has a cohesive function (1985: 59). According to Carter, the two terms are used in similar ways, but they are not identical nor are they used interchangeably. *ʔiltibās* and *sabab* may either cause case attraction or prevent it, while often the case is altogether irrelevant. However, the terms *sabab* and *ʔiltibās* are always understood as elements of meaning.

According to Carter, an important formal difference between *sabab* and *ʔiltibās* is that, with *sabab*, there is always a bound pronoun on the element in its relationship to the antecedent, while with *ʔiltibās*, the pronoun is always found elsewhere. This situation I found to be true in all contexts in which *ʔiltibās* is used. For example, in the sentence *ʔa-zaydan ɖarabta ɖʒāriyatayni yuḥibbuhumā* أَزِيداً ضَرَبْتَ جَارِيَتَيْنِ يُحِبُّهُمَا “Is it Zayd whom you hit two girls that he likes,” the two items *zayd* and *ɖʒāriyatayn* are in *ʔiltibās* relationship not because, as is the case with *sabab*, there is a bound pronoun in the second item that refers back to the first, but rather because there is another, a third item (i.e., *yuḥibbuhumā* “he likes them”) which joins and applies to both the first and second item. In a *sabab* relationship, the sentence would be *ʔa-zaydan ɖarabta ɖʒāriyatayh* أَزِيداً ضَرَبْتَ جَارِيَتَيْهِ “Is it Zayd whom you hit his two girls” where the bound pronoun would fall on the item which is in *sabab* relation to *zayd*. (Sībawayhi 1977: 1/107-108).

Although I agree with Carter that in the case of *ʔiltibās* cohesion is not achieved through the “involved” element itself (as it is the case with *sabab*), but rather through a pronoun found elsewhere in the sentence, I disagree that the pronoun is “often on an element already in *sabab* relationship but displaced by *ʔiltibās* from its domain position; e.g., from agent to direct object” (Carter 1985: 60). As is shown in the previous example, the two items in *ʔiltibās* relationship are the two nouns *zayd* and *ɖʒāriyatayn*. The pronoun exists in the verb *yuḥibbuhumā*. The verb itself is not in *sabab* relationship with the two nouns.

2. The Lexical Meanings of *l_b_s*

Ibn Manzūr (1981) explains several meanings of the derivatives of the root *l_b_s*:

1. *labasa, yalbis* as in *labastu ṣalayhi l-ṣamra... fa-l-tabasa ṣiḍā xālaṭtuḥu ṣalayhi ḥattā lā yaṣrifā dḡihataḥ يَعْرِفَ جِهَتَهُ لَا يَعْرِفُ جِهَتَهُ إِذَا خَالَطْتُهُ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّى لَا يَعْرِفَ جِهَتَهُ* “I confused the matter for him to the extent that he does not know his direction”;
2. *talabbasa ḥubbu fulāna bidammī wa laḥmī ṣayy ixtalaṭ أَي تَلَبَّسَ حُبُّ فُلَانَةَ بَدَمِّي وَلَحْمِي أَي اِخْتَلَطَ* “Her love blended with my blood and flesh”
3. *ṣal-labsu ṣayy ṣal-ṣixtilāt أَي اَللَّبْسُ أَي اِلْاِخْتِلَاطُ* “confusion, mixing”;
4. *ṣal-madḡnūnu muxālaṭun wa-l-tabasa ṣalayhi l-ṣamru ṣayy i-xtalaṭa wa-shtabaha أَي اَلْمَجْنُونُ مُخَالَطٌ وَالتَّبَسَ عَلَيْهِ الْأَمْرُ أَي اِخْتَلَطَ عَلَيْهِ وَاشْتَبَهَ* “The crazy [one] is mixed and matters are confused for him; i.e., things got mixed up and suspicious”;
5. *lābasa = ṣiltabasa: lābasa l-radḡulu l-ṣamra xalaṭahu wa lābastu fulānan ṣaraḡtu bāṭinah أَي لَابَسَ الرَّجُلُ الْأَمْرَ خَالَطَهُ وَلاَبَسْتُ فُلَانًا عَرَفْتُ بَاطِنَهُ* “The man was involved with the matter, and I had been involved with so and so [i.e.,] I knew his inside” (Ibn Manzūr 86-89).

The two meanings that are directly related to our purpose here are those which refer to “confusion” and “involvement.” Both meanings share a common denominator: that of being in a state of mixing with something or someone. Sometimes this mixing results in confusion or suspicion, and at other times it leads to involvement, link, and knowledge.

3. *l_b_s* in Sībawayhi’s *Kitāb*

3.1 The Non-technical Meaning of *l_b_s*

The non-technical terms derived from *l_b_s* are very common in Sībawayhi’s *Kitāb*. For example, he uses *labasa, yalbis* and *ṣiltibās* to refer to ambiguity or confusion. Sībawayhi says: *qad taqūl: kāna zaydun-iṭ-ṭawīlu munṭaliqan ṣinn xiṭfa l-tibāsa z-zaydayn قَدْ تَقُولُ: كَانَ زَيْدُ الطَّوِيلِ مُنْطَلِقًا إِنْ خِفْتَ التَّبَاسَ الرَّيْدَيْنِ* “you may say ‘The tall Zayd was going’ if you were afraid of confusing two men who are both called Zayd” (Sībawayhi 1898: 1/51).¹

¹ The meanings of *l_b_s* in Sībawayhi’s *Kitāb* (see Traupeau 1976):

Vol. 1: 33, 51, 124, 129, 130, 224, 273, 283, 316, 320, 322-23, 334, 389, 403, 430, 438, 455, 456, 470

3.2 The Technical Meaning of *l_b_s*

The following are different passages where derivatives of *l_b_s* are used throughout the *Kitāb* of Sībawayhi:

- In the chapter concerning *mā* which functions like *laysa*, Sībawayhi explains:

mā zaydun karīman wa lā ṣāqilan ḥabūhu, tadḥṣaluhu kaḥannahu li-l-ḥawwali bi-manzilati karīmin li-ḥannahu multabisun bihi ḥiḍā qulta ḥabūhu tudḥrihi ṣalayhi kamā ḥaḍḥrayta ṣalayhi l-karīm مَا زَيْدٌ كَرِيمًا وَلَا عَاقِلًا أَبُوهُ، تَجْعَلُهُ كَأَنَّهُ لِلأَوَّلِ بِمَنْزِلَةِ كَرِيمٍ لِأَنَّهُ ...
 “Zayd is neither generous, nor is his father wise, you consider it [the word ‘wise’] as if it belonged to the first noun [Zayd] in which it [will have] the same status as [the word] generous because it [the word ‘wise’] is involved with [the word] “generous” because when you said “his father” you make the word “wise” follow the same case as you have assigned case for the word “generous” (Sībawayhi 1898: 1/30).

Here, the term *multabis* is used to refer to the two nouns *zayd* and *ḥabūhu*. The word *ḥabūhu* refers back to the noun *zayd*. It is *multabisa bihi*, for according to Al-Sīrāfī (as it appears in the margins of the same page), whenever the same noun is mentioned in the sentence it is correct to use a pronoun suffix instead of repeating it. Therefore, the pronoun suffix {-hu} at the end of *ḥabūhu* refers to *zayd* and causes the two nouns to be bound. In this effect, the particle *mā* applies also to the noun *ḥabūhu* and therefore makes it in the nominative just like the noun it is bound with; i.e., *zaydun* (Sībawayhi 1898: 1/30).

- In the chapter on whatever is in the accusative with respect to the interrogative *hamza*, (Sībawayhi 1898: 1:55), both Sībawayhi and Al-Sīrāfī explain that any noun used after the interrogative *hamza*, which is in the accusative case, is so inflected because of an embedded verb between the interrogative *hamza* and the noun. This verb operates on the noun and causes it to be in the accusative as its direct object. The embedded verb is the same as the verb used after the accusative noun. Therefore, in the example: *أَزِيدًا ضَرَبْتَهُ* *ḥa-zaydan ḥarabtahu* “Is it Zayd whom you hit?,” the noun

zayd is in the accusative, because there is an embedded verb between the *hamza* and *zayd*, which has the same “interpretation” *tafsīr* as the verb *ḍarabtaḥu*, and which operates on the noun *zayd* to make it accusative. The “embedded” verb is a notion commonly shared by all grammarians since one of the established syntactic rules bans the *maḥmūl* “the operated on” to precede its *ḥāmīl* “the operator.” Thus, no direct object would precede its verb, and receives the accusative case.

- Sībawayhi offers three examples to show how case inflections are determined because of an *ḥiltibās* relationship. In these examples, Sībawayhi maintains that the second noun receives the accusative case, because there is an item following the noun which is in *ḥiltibās* relationship with the first accusative noun. The three examples are:

1. *ʔa-zaydan ḍarabta ḥamran wa ʔaxāh* أزيداً ضَرَبْتَ عَمراً وَأَخَاهُ
2. *ʔa-zaydan ḍarabta raḍḡulan yuḥibbuh* أزيداً ضَرَبْتَ رَجُلًا يُحِبُّهُ
3. *ʔa-zaydan ḍarabta ḍḡāriyatayni yuḥibbuhumā* أزيداً ضَرَبْتَ جَارَيْتَيْنِ يُحِبُّهُمَا

Sībawayhi states:

*wa mimmā yunṣabu ʔawwaluhu liʔanna ʔāxirahu multabisun bi-l-ʔawwali qawluḥ:
ʔa-zaydan ḍarabta ḥamran wa ʔaxāhu, wa ʔa-zaydan ḍarabta raḍḡulan yuḥibbuh,
wa ʔa-zaydan ḍarabta ḍḡāriyatayni yuḥibbuhumā. Fa ʔinnamā naṣabta l-ʔawwala
liʔanna l-ʔāxira multabisun bihi ʔiḍ kānat ṣifatuḥu multabisatan biḥ*

وَمِمَّا يُنْصَبُ أَوَّلُهُ لِأَنَّ آخِرَهُ مُلْتَبِسٌ بِالْأَوَّلِ قَوْلُهُ: أزيداً ضَرَبْتَ عَمراً وَأَخَاهُ، وَأزيداً ضَرَبْتَ رَجُلًا
يُحِبُّهُ، وَأزيداً ضَرَبْتَ جَارَيْتَيْنِ يُحِبُّهُمَا. فَإِنَّمَا نَصَبْتُ الْأَوَّلَ لِأَنَّ الْآخِرَ مُلْتَبِسٌ بِهِ إِذْ كَانَتْ صِفَتُهُ

مُلْتَبِسَةً بِهِ (Sībawayhi 1977: 1/107)

In example (1) the noun *zayd* is in the accusative because the noun *ḥamran* is in the accusative and is followed by *ʔaxāhu*, which is in *ḥiltibās* relationship with the first noun *zaydan*. That is, the pronoun suffix in the word *ʔaxāhu* refers to Zayd. In examples (1)-(2), the noun *zaydan* is in the accusative because *raḍḡulan* and *ḍḡāriyatayn* are in the accusative and are followed by the verbs *yuḥibbuh* and *yuḥibbuhumā* respectively, which are in *ḥiltibās* relationship with the first noun *zaydan*. Sībawayhi explains that these two verbs function as the *ṣifa* “modifier” of the

second noun, which is in *ʔiltibās* relationship with the first noun. Sībawayhi seems to pose two questions here:

- a) Why is the noun *zayd* in the accusative case? The answer he gives is that it is because *zayd* is in an *ʔiltibās* relationship with the accusative word *ḏāriyatayn* “two girls”
- b) Why is *ḏāriyatayn* in *ʔiltibās* relationship with *zayd*? The answer is that the description of the word *ḏāriyatayn* (i.e., *yuhibbuhumā* “He loves them both”) is in *ʔiltibās* relation with *zayd*. That is, there is a pronoun suffix that refers to the two girls and that serves as the direct object of the verb, while the verb itself includes *zayd* as its agent.

If we examine the meaning of *ʔiltibās* in the above examples, we find that it can never mean “to confuse.” In example (3), *zayd* and *ḏāriyatayn* (the two nouns in *ʔiltibās* relationship) cannot possibly mean “confused” together in any way. This is only one example among numerous others where the understanding of *ʔiltibās* as a term meaning “confusion” — as suggested by Troupeau (1976) and Mosel (1980)—simply does not hold. Hence, the understanding of *ʔiltibās* should take another angle: that of a relationship or tie which does not lead to confusion but rather to the fusion of words together.

But intriguing questions remain. For example, what does it mean to say that two nouns are in *ʔiltibās* relationship? And how is it that these two nouns are established in an *ʔiltibās* relationship? From the examples cited above, it seems that they are in *ʔiltibās* relationship because on the semantic level they are both involved in the same situation. This semantic relationship manifests itself on the syntactic level by an item in the sentence which binds the nouns together. In the sentence *أَزِيداً ضَرَبْتَ جَارِيَتَيْنِ يُحِبُّهُمَا ʔa-zaydan ḏarabta ḏāriyatayni yuhibbuhumā* this item is the verb *yuhibbuhumā*, where the agent of the verb is the noun *zayd* and the direct object (in this case the pronoun suffix) is the other noun *ḏāriyatayni*.

Thus, Carter’s analysis of the term *ʔiltibās* is correct, because the pronoun is not attached to the noun in *ʔiltibās* relationship with *zayd*, but rather to another item; i.e., the verb here. However, Carter’s explanation of the *sabab* relationship between the verb, its agent, and direct object, does not seem to apply to the verb here since the pronoun suffix

does not refer to the first noun; i.e., *zayd*. This is an indication of an *iltibās* relationship that does not also illustrate a *sabab* relation between the same elements in question.

In example (2) *أَزِيدًا ضَرَبْتَ رَجُلًا يُحِبُّهُ* *ʔa-zaydan ɗarabta raɗɗulan yuħibbuh* “Is it Zayd whom you hit a man who loves him (i.e., loves Zayd)?” Sībawayhi explains the accusative case inflection on the noun *zayd* through a semantic relationship. He argues that:

- a) *zayd* is accusative because the noun, which is a direct object, is also accusative
- b) The reason why the noun *zayd* takes the same case as the noun *raɗɗul* is that they are both in *iltibās* relationship
- c) The two nouns are in *iltibās* relationship because the adjectival clause *yuħibbuhu*, which belongs to the noun *raɗɗul*, involves also the noun *zayd*. In other words, Sībawayhi makes the phrase *yuħibbuhu* “he likes him,” which joins the agent *raɗɗul* and the object *zayd* together, the reason for the *iltibās* relationship between the two nouns *zayd* and *raɗɗul*, and consequently the justification for the appearance of the same case ending on both *zayd* and *raɗɗul*. The semantic bond of the two elements *zayd* and *raɗɗul* justifies the case inflection of both items in the sentence.

Here, the important thing is not that one of the two nouns is an agent and that the other one is a direct object. Rather, the vital element in an *iltibās* relationship seems to be that existence of an element in the sentence that joins both nouns together, irrespective of whether or not the bound pronoun refers to the first or the second noun. *iltibās*, in that sense, should be understood as a linking relationship which leads to cohesion.

Sībawayhi provides a linguistic test of preposing the adjective in a sentence in order to determine whether or not two items are in *iltibās* relationship. He stated:

wa ʔiðā ʔaradta ʔan taɟlama l-tibāsahu fa-ʔadxilhu fi bābi l-laðī tuqaddamu fihi ʔ-ʔifa,, fa-mā ḥasuna taqðīmu ʔifatihī fa-huwa multabisun bi-l-ʔawwali, wa mā lā yaḥsunu fa-laysa multabisan bi-hi. ʔalā tarā ʔannaka taqūl: marartu bi-raɗɗulin munṭaliqatin ɗǧāriyatāni yuħibbuhumā, wa marartu bi-raɗɗulin munṭaliqin zaydun wa ʔaxūhu, li-ʔannaka lammā ʔashrakta baynahumā fi l-fiʔli ʔāra zaydun multabisan bi raɗɗul.

وَإِذَا أَرَدْتُ أَنْ تَعْلَمَ التَّبَاسَةَ فَأَدْخِلْهُ فِي بَابِ الَّذِي تُقَدِّمُ فِيهِ الصِّفَةَ، فَمَا حَسَنَ تَقْدِيمِ صِفَتِهِ فَهُوَ مُلْتَبِسٌ بِالْأَوَّلِ، وَمَا لَا يَحْسُنُ فَلَيْسَ مُلْتَبِساً بِهِ. أَلَا تَرَى أَنَّكَ تَقُولُ: مَرَرْتُ بِرَجُلٍ مُنْطَلِقَةٍ جَارِيَتَانِ يُحِبُّهُمَا، وَمَرَرْتُ بِرَجُلٍ مُنْطَلِقٍ زَيْدٌ وَأَخُوهُ، لِأَنَّكَ لَمَّا أَشْرَكْتَ بَيْنَهُمَا فِي الْفِعْلِ صَارَ زَيْدٌ مُلْتَبِساً بِرَجُلٍ.

“If you want to show the involvement of an item, apply the linguistic test of preposing the adjective. The item whose adjective can grammatically be fronted, is in this case involved with the first item in the sentence. That item whose adjective could not be grammatically fronted, is not involved with the first item in the sentence. Don’t you see that you say ‘I passed by a man two slave-girls whom he loves are going,’ and ‘I passed by a man whose brother and Zayd are going.’ Because when you made the two items share the verb, [the word] ‘zayd’ became involved with [the word] *radzūl* (Sībawayhi 1898: 1/55).

In the above quotation, Sībawayhi goes on to explain *iltibās* by examples where the adjective is preposed and the *iltibās* relationship is maintained. Sībawayhi then offers other examples in which the preposing test does not yield a cohesive relationship. He states:

wa law qulta: ʔa-zaydan ɗarabta ʕamran wa ɗarabta ʔaxāhu, lam yakun kalāman li-ʔanna ʕamran laysa min sababi l-ʔawwali wa lā multabisan bi-hi. ʔalā tarā ʔannaka law qulta: marartu bi-radzulin qāʔimin wa qāʔimin ʔaxūhu, lam yadʒuz li-ʔanna ʔahadahumā multabisun bi-l-ʔawwali wa l-ʔaxara laysa multabisan
 وَلَوْ قُلْتَ: أَرَيْدَا ضَرَبْتَ عَمْرًا وَضَرَبْتَ أَخَاهُ، لَمْ يَكُنْ كَلَامًا لِأَنَّ عَمْرًا لَيْسَ مِنْ سَبَبِ الْأَوَّلِ وَلَا مُلْتَبِساً بِهِ. أَلَا تَرَى أَنَّكَ لَوْ قُلْتَ: مَرَرْتُ بِرَجُلٍ قَائِمٍ وَقَائِمِ أَخُوهُ، لَمْ يَجْزُ لِأَنَّ أَحَدَهُمَا مُلْتَبِسٌ بِالْأَوَّلِ وَالْآخَرَ لَيْسَ مُلْتَبِساً

“If you said ‘Is it Zayd that you hit Amr and hit his brother’, it would not be a complete sentence because [the word] *ʕamr* is not semantically related to the first [noun; i.e., *zayd*], nor is it involved with it. Don’t you see that if you said ‘I passed by a man who Amr is standing and whose brother is standing, [this] will not be possible because one of them (i.e., *ʔaxūhu* “his brother”) is involved with the word *radzūl* and the other (i.e., *ʕamr*) is not” (Sībawayhi 1898: 1/55).

The noun *ʕamr* is not in an *iltibās* relationship with the noun *zayd* because *ʕamr* does not have anything in it that refers to *zayd*. The bound pronoun which is at the end of the word *ʔaxāhu* does not refer to both nouns and therefore does not bind them together. According to

the earlier examples which illustrate the *ʔiltibās* relationship, there must exist in the sentence a verb or any other item which functions to join the two nouns in *ʔiltibās*. In the example above, such an item does not exist. Nor is the *sabab* relationship maintained, because the word *ʕamr* does not have a pronoun that refers back to the first noun *zayd*.

4. *ʔiltibās* as a Justification for Case Inflection

There are several examples in *Kitāb* through which Sībawayhi explains how case inflection, a syntactic feature, is related to the concept of *min sabab* and *ʔiltibās*. One chapter is entitled:

hāḍā bābu mā tadẓrī ʕalayhi ʕifatu mā kāna min sababihi wa ʕifatu ma l-tabasa bi-hi ʔaw bi-shayʔin min sababihi kamaḍrā ʕifatihi l-latī xaluṣat lah

هَذَا بَابُ مَا تَجْرِي عَلَيْهِ صِفَةٌ مَا كَانَ مِنْ سَبَبِهِ وَصِفَةٌ مَا التَّبَسَّ بِهِ أَوْ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ سَبَبِهِ كَمَجْرَى صِفَتِهِ الَّتِي خَلُصَتْ لَهُ

“This is the chapter of case inflections of adjectives following items that are semantically related to them or items that are involved with them featuring the same case inflections as would regular adjectives” (Sībawayhi 1898: 1/226 -227).

In this chapter, Sībawayhi explains that the adjectival phrase which follows a noun takes the same case ending whether it is an adjective directly referring to the noun or one that is semantically related to the noun it is modifying, or whether it is an adjective involved with it or with an item that is semantically related to it.

Below are three examples which Sībawayhi presented and which Al-Sīrāfī commented on. In example (4), an adjective gets the genitive case because it belongs to something that is in *sabab* relationship with a genitive noun. Al-Sīrāfī explains that the adjective in this example is *ḍāribin*, which is an active participle from the verb *ḍaraba* “to hit.” The agent of this verbal element is the noun *ʔabūhu* “his father.” According to Al-Sīrāfī, the noun *ʔabūhu* is semantically related to the noun *raḍḡul* in *marartu bi-raḍḡul* (i.e., *sabab*; cf. Carter 1985). Al-Sīrāfī adds that *min sabab* refers to any verb [or verbal element] whose agent is in an *ʔidāfa* relationship with its bound pronoun: مَا كَانَ الْفِعْلُ مِنْ فَاعِلِهِ اسْمًا مُضَافًا إِلَى مَ كَانَتْ بِرَجُلٍ ضَارِبٍ أَبُوهُ رَجُلًا *mā kāna l-fiʕlu min fāʕilihi sman muḍāfan ʔilā ḍamirih* (Sībawayhi 1898: 1/226).

4. *marartu bi-raḍḡulin ḍāribin ʔabūhu raḍḡulan* مَرَرْتُ بِرَجُلٍ ضَارِبٍ أَبُوهُ رَجُلًا

“I passed by a man whose father is hitting [another] man.”

In example (5), an adjective receives the genitive because it belongs to something that is in *ʔiltibās* relationship with a genitive noun. The active participle *muxāliṭihi* is the adjective to the noun *raḍḍul*. It is also the verbal element whose agent is the noun *dāʔun* “an illness.” Al-Sīrāfi explains that the noun *dāʔ* is involved with the noun *raḍḍul*, because the adjective *muxāliṭ* has the bound pronoun which refers to the noun *raḍḍul*.

5. *marartu bi-raḍḍulin muxāliṭihi dāʔun* مَرَرْتُ بِرَجُلٍ مُخَالِطِهِ دَاءٌ

“I passed by a man suffering from an apparent illness.”

In example (6), an adjective receives the genitive case, because it belongs to something that is in *ʔiltibās* relationship with something that is in *sabab* relationship with a genitive noun. Al-Sīrāfi explains that the adjective here is the active participle *mulāzimin* and that its agent is the noun *raḍḍulun* (at the end of the sentence). The noun *raḍḍulin* (the first *raḍḍul* in the sentence) is involved with the noun *ʔabāhu* because of the bound pronoun in *ʔabāhu*, which refers to the noun *raḍḍulin*. The difference between example (6) and example (5) is the fact that in example (5) the adjective itself refers to two nouns in *ʔiltibās* relationship, whereas in example (6) the adjective refers to an item that is in *ʔiltibās* relationship with another item that is semantically related to the noun being modified by the adjective.

6. *marartu bi-raḍḍulin mulāzimin ʔabāhu raḍḍulun* مَرَرْتُ بِرَجُلٍ مُلَازِمٍ أَبَاهُ رَجُلٌ

“I passed by a man whose father is being accompanied by [another] man.”

More examples of the previous type of semantic relations and their bearing on syntactic inflections are found in *Kitāb* (Sībawayhi 1898: 1/233, 243-44). The difference between *sabab* and *ʔiltibās* in the above examples is that in *ʔiltibās* there are either two verbs in the same proposition, while in *sabab* relationship there is only one, or that in *ʔiltibās* there is one verb which applies to two nouns.

5. The Difference Between *sabab* and *ʔiltibās*

In the *sabab* relationship, it seems that there is always a pronoun suffix that relates two nouns to each other. In the *ʔiltibās* there are at least three items that are in a relationship with one another. Two of them are sharing or involved with a third party. This third party may be a

verb or a verbal element such as a verbal noun or an active or passive participle. In example (4), the pronoun suffix in the word *ʔabūhu* refers back to the first *radʒul*, and Sībawayhi uses the term *sabab* to explain the relationship. In example (5), Sībawayhi refers to the pronoun in the active participle *muxāliṭ* by applying the term *ʔiltibās* to the noun *radʒul*. By examining the two examples we find that in the first, there are two nouns, *radʒul* and *ʔabū*, which are in *sabab* relation because of the pronoun suffix in *ʔabūhu*. But in the second example, the verbal element *muxāliṭ* has a pronoun suffix referring to the noun *radʒul*, but it also has another embedded pronoun (“it” in the masculine) to refer to the agent: *dāʔ* “disease.” In the *ʔiltibās* relation, both nouns — *dāʔ* and *radʒul* — are referred to by the active participle *muxāliṭ*. the noun *radʒul* is related syntactically and semantically to the word *muxāliṭihi*, but it is also involved with the noun *dāʔ*, to which *muxāliṭ* also refers. Therefore, *ʔiltibās* may be seen as a relationship wherein two nouns are fused with a verbal element in a way that ties the different elements of the proposition together. Once this relationship is established, it becomes easier to figure out the case inflections of the different parts of the sentence since the cohesive relations are set; it becomes clear as to which element is *min sabab* with what other element, and which element is *multabis* with what other element.

6. Conclusion

As demonstrated above, terms derived from the root *l_b_s* as used in Sībawayhi’s *Kitāb* are employed to refer to cohesive relations between different elements in sentences. These cohesive relations manifest themselves in many circumstances through case inflections. Terms such as *ʔiltibās* and *multabis* are therefore essential in understanding the semantico-syntactic relations between the different elements of sentences.

The different elements of the sentence in complex propositions, especially when pronoun suffixes are used, make it difficult sometimes for the reader/hearer to relate the different parts of the proposition together. Consequently, it becomes more difficult to provide, let alone justify, the use of certain case inflections. Sībawayhi introduces terms which specifically explain the relationships between the different elements in complex propositions. Among these terms are *min sabab* “semantically related to,” and *multabis* “involved/fused with.”

Throughout the *Kitāb*, Sībawayhi poses the questions: What is possible? What makes sense? For those who know Arabic well, it sometimes seems irrational that he asks these questions. That is because the logic behind the language is often taken for granted, and the relationship between the different elements of the proposition is, or seems to be, intuitively

obvious. But Sībawayhi, like other later grammarians, tries to come up with combinations of structures which may seem grammatically correct but which are actually senseless. In the case of the use of *ʔiltibās*, Sībawayhi was able to explain why some structures that may appear to be grammatical are actually senseless, because they do not maintain the correct references or because they carry illogical references to each other. This is precisely why I argue that the term *ʔiltibās* is not syntactic *per se*. The term *ʔiltibās*, unlike any other syntactic terms, does not refer to a structure or an element which functions in a specific way that results in a specific case inflection (such as the agent, the object, the predicate, etc.) or the particles), nor is it a structure that serves to modify another, as is the case with the *ṣilah*, the adjectival clauses, or other modifiers. Instead, it is a semantic term utilized to explain the ligaments and the bonds between the different elements of the sentence. These bonds are often represented by bound pronouns through which syntactic operations are applied. It is only by examining the meaning of the relationships between the different words in the sentence that Sībawayhi is able to provide an explanation of the syntactic inflections. Structures become totally senseless whenever these bonds are not maintained.

When Sībawayhi asks “Is this possible?” or when he claims that a certain structure does not make a good sentence, he usually gives syntactic as well as semantic explanations. Some of the semantic explanations depend heavily on the different bonds that words have in each proposition. As stated above, these bonds are not always clear to the hearer or reader. The reason that he or she finds it difficult to understand the above structures is the fact that pronoun suffixes may be interpreted incorrectly with respect to their reference, especially when the sentence is complex. This is primarily why Sībawayhi and later grammarians used, in addition to *sabab* and *ʔiltibās*, other terms such as *ṣilah*, *taḍmīn*, and others. Some later grammarians, however, stopped using Sībawayhi’s terms, although the relationships continued to be acknowledged and explained in new contexts and terminology (Taha 2010).

Carter believes that *ʔiltibās*, which is one of the original elements of *sabab*, was lost after Sībawayhi and that the result was to lay greater emphasis on the formal features of the construction. This occurred at the cost of cohesive aspects, to the extent that one then learns *how* these constructions acquire their form but not *why* (Carter 1985: 64).

On the other hand, one could argue that the concept of cohesion expressed by the technical term *ʔiltibās* was actually never lost, but rather began to be expressed through other technical terms such as the use of *min ṣilat* in Ibn al-Sarraj. In a previous study (Taha 2010), I was intrigued by the use of terms such as *min ṣilat* and *fī ṣilat* which appeared in Sībawayhi and continued to be employed in the works of Al-Mubarrid and Ibn al-Sarraj. I showed that

Ibn al-Sarraj used the two terms *min ṣilatīhi* and *fī ṣilatīhi* irrespective of the well-known meaning of *ṣilah* as the relative clause. Instead, *min ṣilatīhi* and *fī ṣilatīhi* were both used by Ibn al-Sarraj to refer to structures which fall in the domain of an item. This domain, of course, formed a syntactic unit which is essential for the meaning to be complete. Unlike relative clauses, *min ṣilatīhi* implies that the meaning of a proposition is not complete without the *ṣilah* being maintained. I, therefore, argue here that such terms as *ʔiltibās* were actually used by Sībawayhi as part of an attempt to voice out the different types of bonds between words in the same construction which essentially function as cohesive devices. Cohesive devices cannot be interpreted away from syntax. Cohesive devices, in my view, can be explained through syntax and are accounted for through syntactic processes. However, it is rather misleading to think of such cohesive devices as purely syntactic.

This article attempted to present an inclusive account of the use of *ʔiltibās* in Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*. Based on the foregoing analysis, we could argue that Sībawayhi used the term technically to refer to semantic bonds between different elements of sentences. Although it has attempted to illustrate how terminology was employed to present semantic and syntactic arguments, the paper has not examined the possible replacement of the term *ʔiltibās* in later grammarians' works. Future research would hopefully unravel other terminology used by later grammarians to refer to sentence cohesion.

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